

OCI No. 0343
Copy No. 24

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE
23 November 1954

SUEJECT: The Current Situation in Cuba

Conclusions:

1. The 1 November election may be said to have presented the Cuban people with a second fait accompli--the first being the 10 March 1952 coup by which General Batista seized power. Since the election does not represent a true solution to the Cuban problem, political difficulties can be expected to continue.

2. The mass of the Cuban people has remained indifferent to the results of the election. What active resentment has existed is being overcome by the actual holding of elections and the promised restoration of democratic processes. Most Cubans appear relieved that the "political crisis" is over and that revolutionary tension has diminished.

3. President Batista has replaced with a comparatively honest and orderly government, the former corrupt Prio regime. His political strategy continues to be aimed at insuring the continuation of his regime in power and gaining wider public acceptance of it. The election has succeeded, to a moderate degree, in attaining the objectives for which it was designed. Batista continues to broaden and develop the political forces supporting him. He is making significant moves to increase his popularity which appears to be growing.

4. The principal political opposition groups remain fragmented into antagonistic sectors which do not constitute effective political forces. Attempts to form a united front opposition so far have failed. The Grau forces are losing some of their political strength, the Prio group continues its revolutionary activities, while the Ortodoxo name, unless revived by inspiring leadership, may lose its identity in other political ranks. A new party may emerge as the legal opposition minority party which will participate in the "new" Batista government.

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Now that the elections are over, the possibility of a successful revolutionary coup appears more remote than ever.

6. President Batista has not yet gained the full confidence and support of the people, although the election and imminent restoration of democratic institutions constitute a strong influence for stability. By thus consolidating his position he has rendered the possibility of a "palace revolution" more remote. The regime, however, continues to be a military dictatorship dependent on the loyalty and support of the armed forces whose strength is considered capable of thwarting any revolutionary action. Persistent rumors of a counterrevolutionary coup continue to produce an unsettling effect. The regime's principal weakness is the concentration of power in Batista.

7. Economic stability of the country has never been seriously threatened although economic difficulties have been experienced. Contraction from the 1951-1952 sugar boom period has ceased with the return to a normal level of operation. The country can look forward to a period of moderate economic well-being.

8. Organized labor has been going through a difficult period, largely because it has failed to receive the financial and political support it was accustomed to get from the previous government. It, however, can be expected to continue to cooperate with the regime in return for future concessions.

9. Batista continues to dominate the armed forces over which he has tightened control. It is considered unlikely that the military will make any move that might jeopardize their current privileged position. The armed forces are considered superior in combat effectiveness to any force which might be mustered by enemies of the regime; and they are fully loyal to Batista.

10. The Cuban Communist Party--with an estimated strength of 50,000 of which some 25,000 are militants--remains the strongest and most influential in the Caribbean

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area. Its greatest influence and activity continues to be in the labor movement. Its strength in youth, women's and students groups is almost as great. Communist strength and influence in education remains significant and may be growing. A comparatively recent development is increased infiltration into radio, television, and press. Communists are having some success in infiltrating other parties. They continue to possess capabilities for sabotage, espionage, and limited guerilla warfare. They can be expected to exploit any antiregime outbreaks. However, they lack the potentiality, by themselves, to create serious and widespread disturbances.

The party's outlawing and continued repression have caused it to lose some strength. Efforts to register a new front party have failed as have attempts to form a united opposition front with other groups. Communist publications have been suppressed. Communists have very little, if any, influence in the army, navy, and police.

The Batista regime probably will soft-pedal the Communist issue whenever political expediency so dictates.

11. Cuba's relations with other Caribbean governments will continue to be cordial with the possible exception of Costa Rica. The Batista regime can be expected to maintain close relations with the United States and a firm pro-Western anti-Communist stand.

1 November 1954 Election

The 1 November 1954 election, marked by considerable abstentionism, was one of the quietest in Cuban history. Returns compiled by the military authorities at Camp Columbia, army headquarters in the suburbs of Havana, show an overwhelming majority for General Batista who has received 1,244,813 votes to 181,399 for Ramon Grau San Martin. This indicates that about 50 percent of the qualified electorate, some 2.9 million, have voted-- Batista obtaining about 90 percent of the votes cast. Dr. Rafael Guas Inclan, head of the Liberal Party, has been elected to the vice presidency. Justo Luis del Pozo, mayor of Havana since the 10 March 1952 coup, has been elected by a wide margin to continue in his post--the most important in the country after the presidency. Official results, which are expected to be announced shortly by the Superior Electoral Tribunal, probably will not show figures at great variance from the above.

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The abstentionism which took place was largely that occasioned by the participation of only small sectors of the greater Autentico and Ortodoxo parties. Grau has stated publicly that not more than 10 percent of the electorate actually voted and has charged that the election returns are completely fraudulent and incorrect and have been altered to give an impression of electoral participation not consonant with reality. The true results presumably lie closer to the government's released figures. The government coalition numbered a reported 1,663,663 affiliates while the opposition totaled 215,385. Many coalition supporters probably turned out, fearing the loss of their government jobs if they did not vote, since this is one of the penalties for not voting.

Grau's eleventh-hour dramatic withdrawal, his appeal to his Autentico Party followers to boycott the elections, and his later threat to expel from the party any Autentico who might be elected to office and accepted it, apparently have not received wide acceptance within Autentico ranks. A number of his adherents disregarded his appeal and continued to run for office or, if they were voters, voted for their own party choices. As a result, 18 senators (minority representation guaranteed by law) and 27 representatives from the Autentico ranks won seats in the new congress. The majority of these reportedly have already quit the Autentico ranks and have expressed their intention to accept their posts.

Despite the expected participation of the elected Autentico senators and representatives in the new government, the election, a virtually uncontested affair in which the opposition played no effective role, may be said to have been one in name only. The Cuban people have been presented with a second fait accompli--the first being the 10 March 1952 coup by which Batista seized power. Although on the face of things the regime has received a legal mandate to continue in office for another four years, political difficulties can be expected to continue since the election does not represent a true solution to the Cuban problem.

Public Reaction to the Election

The mass of the Cuban people has remained indifferent to the results of the elections. The Cubans, more apathetic than disaffected with the regime, have resented almost solely the fact that Batista's coup interrupted the "constitutional rhythm" of their government. The holding of elections and the imminent restoration of constitutional processes is

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doing much toward overcoming this feeling. The majority of Cubans, who heard countless rumors about a revolutionary attempt on election day, are reported to be relieved that the "political crisis" is now over and that revolutionary tension has diminished.

Electoral Process Timetable

With the holding of elections, the electoral process remains unimpeded and the country can look forward to the restoration of democratic institutions as promised by the Batista regime.

Article 14 of the current electoral code, Law Decree 1215 of 26 November 1953, sets the dates on which elected officials are to take office. On 3 January 1955, municipal aldermen and mayors will take office. On 15 January, provincial governors will assume their posts. On 28 January, federal senators and representatives are to take office. The new congress will be formed and both the present Council of Ministers (cabinet) and the Consultative Council (advisory body) will cease to exist. The president and vice president will take office on 24 February and presumably the new cabinet will be named then. On that date, the current "Constitutional Statutes" will cease to govern and the 1940 Constitution will be restored in its entirety.

Should these events take place as scheduled, although there will be present largely the form and not the substance of democratic government, there will be established a facade of legality which is likely to be accepted by a majority of Cubans, according to all reports.

Batista's Political Strategy

Ever since his coup, Batista has replaced with a comparatively honest and orderly government the former Prío administration which was characterized by excessive graft and corruption, unpunished political gangsterism and repeated labor strikes. There is evidence to indicate that Batista will continue to keep throttled to a moderate pace the usual activities connected with graft, corruption and the spoils system

Batista's actual holding of elections, as promised, has succeeded to a moderately successful degree in attaining the objectives for which it was originally designed: 1) to give some democratic semblance to his government, 2) to gain wider public appeal, and 3) to obtain a legal mandate from

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the people for a new four year term.

Batista continues to develop his flexible coalition of four parties which serve to broaden and maintain his political support. The Progressive Action Party (PAP) and the Radical Union Party (UR) lie in the center and somewhat left of center respectively in orientation and are composed principally of his followers. The Liberal and Democratic parties, which are splinter groups from the old-line rightist parties of the same name have provided Batista with the benefit of their names. Thus Batista is offering Cubans parties to meet every view.

Batista has made and is making significant moves to increase his popularity: repeal of onerous public order laws, amnesty for many political prisoners, an ever expanding public works program, an economic and social development program, and certain concessions to labor. There is evidence that his support among lower class groups is growing and that he is also drawing some conservative groups into his camp through moderate policies.

Batista has some substantial achievements to his credit: new roads, an aqueduct system, agricultural and industrial aid and other improvements, undertaken in the face of falling sugar prices--a situation effectively counteracted by his firm sugar policy.

He broke Cuba's relations with the USSR and has outlawed the Communist party. He has kept the political opposition divided and has suppressed successfully to date all attempts against the regime.

These and other moves appear to be making progress toward the restoration of the people's confidence in him--a condition which, next to the support of the military, Batista deems important to the continuation of his regime.

Political Opposition

The numerically strongest opposition force, the Cuban Revolutionary Party (Autentico), continues to be divided into antagonistic sectors headed by Grau and ex-president Carlos Prío Socarras.

Grau's "collaborationist" group with some 194,297 affiliates, was the only Autentico Party sector to participate in the recent elections. Grau, through his

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chameleon-like electoral behavior, blatant political opportunism and dictatorial party command apparently has been and is alienating many of his adherents. Present indications are that he, together with his diminishing followers, probably will not continue to play as prominent a role in Cuban politics as during the past two years.

The principal leadership of the militant sector of the Autentico Party, the Prio sector, is currently entrusted to Manuel Antonio Varona since Prio is in voluntary exile. Varona actually heads what may be termed the less overtly militant faction of this sector. The action group of this sector on the other hand is led by an able, brilliant and aggressive revolutionist Aureliano Sanchez Arango

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The Cuban People's Party (Ortodoxo), originally a leading party comprised of elements ranging from far right to far left, has failed to recover from the staggering blow it received by the death of its charismatic leader, Eduardo Chibas. Its disintegration into a group of quarreling factions, produced by the March 1952 coup, continues. Its participation in the 1 November election was virtually nominal. Each of the four principal sectors of this party bears its leader's name.

The Roberto Agramonte sector has the largest following; personifies passive resistance to Batista and represents the Chibas ideal of political independence and isolation. Some of its members in the future may join the Authentic ranks which wish to compose the legal minority representation in the Batista government. Others may transfer to militant groups be they Autentico or Ortodoxo.

The Emilio Ochoa sector represents the most militant Orthodox faction. It is comprised of elements who 1) consider violence the best or only means of ousting Batista, 2) believe that the Ortodoxos can be effective only through collaboration with other parties and 3) feel that Agramonte is unattractive politically and can never effectively rally the opposition about him. Although Ortodoxo Party president at the time of the coup, Ochoa since then has declined considerably in prestige.

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The Jose Pardo Llada sector is a splinter group of the Ochoa sector. Pardo returned not too long ago from voluntary exile in Mexico since the coup. His followers are opposed to association with the Prio revolutionary elements and were last reported exploring the possibilities of joining the Agramonte ranks. The future course of this group is not clear.

The Carlos Marquez Sterling sector (for want of a better name) was originally the group of Federico Fernandez Casas who, by registering the party name, made it legally possible for the Ortodoxos to participate in the elections. Fernandez turned over the presidency of this group to Marquez who resigned in March 1954 following his failure to reconcile opposing factions within the greater Orthodox party. This sector ran candidates in only three provinces during the recent elections. Raul Chibas, brother of Eduardo Chibas, has been active in its ranks although he has refused the presidency of the group. Although this sector may be said to be currently ineffective politically, it may serve as the future rallying point for Ortodoxo who wish to constitute a legal opposition to the Batista government.

Recent information points to the possible emergence of a new party composed of successful Autentico candidates, who won seats in the new congress, and their followers. These leaders have started to break away from the Grau and Prio Authentic ranks and have stated that they intend to take their legislative seats and establish themselves as a legal opposition minority party participating fully in government activities. Batista has told the American chargé that nine minority senators--who belong to this group--are not antagonistic toward him personally and would vote with the government when convenient to them. This party, when established, probably will draw its strength from the ranks of both the Authentic and Orthodox parties. The administration is likely to give its approbation to the appearance of this new party although it will probably keep close surveillance over its activities in order to prevent it from growing into too strong a political force.

In summary, the principal opposition groups remain fragmented into antagonistic sectors which do not constitute effective political forces. Attempts at unification for participation in the 1 November elections as a united front of opposition to Batista failed miserably. The Grau forces are losing some of their political strength, the Prio group continues its revolutionary activities while the Orthodox name,

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unless revived by some challenging and inspiring leader, may gradually lose its identity in the ranks of other political groups. A new party may emerge as the legal opposition minority party which will participate fully in the "new" Batista government.

Revolutionary Opposition

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25X1 [redacted] Militant groups opposed to the government now include many Autentico party members, some Ortodoxo party members, many students (traditionally rebellious and pro-reform), members of youth groups, some disaffected military elements, discontented labor elements, political gangsters and some professional revolutionaries.

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25X1 [redacted] The Cuban people, to date, have given no indication of preferring to attempt a solution by force. While having no particular liking for Batista, they still possess unpleasant memories of the former corrupt Prio and Grau regimes.

25X1 Many reported "D-days" have come and no attack has ever materialized. The long-heralded island-wide counterrevolutionary coup on election day under Prio and Carlos Hevia did not come off. Neither did plans to cry "fraud" over Batista's victory succeed in inciting all opposition groups to rise in open rebellion as was widely reported. [redacted]

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Viewed against this background and in the light of recent developments--such as the holding of elections and the imminent restoration of democratic processes--the likelihood of a successful counterrevolutionary coup appears more remote as time goes on and certainly more difficult to justify. Nevertheless the possibility of one--especially one involving the assassination of Batista and his key officials--cannot be excluded properly.

Stability of the government

From all indications, Batista has not yet gained the full confidence and support of the Cuban people although his popularity appears to be increasing. The actual holding of elections and promised early restoration of the Constitution of 1940 is constituting a strong influence for peace and stability.

By continuing to maintain, firmer than ever, the reins of government in his hands, Batista has consolidated his own position and made the likelihood of a "palace revolution" even more remote.

The regime continues, however, to be in essence a military dictatorship with its power to govern dependent on the continued loyalty and support of the armed forces. The threat of a countercoup by opposition forces continues to produce an unsettling effect over the entire country.

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However, the Cuban government and armed forces are "tied together" by one individual--Batista. This constitutes the regime's principal weakness. Should Batista be alive and in full control of the government at the time of an internal revolt or armed invasion or both, then the armed forces, as a whole loyal, would most likely be able to repel any such action. Should Batista be assassinated as a prelude to an attempted revolution or otherwise incapacitated from personal control of the government, a chaotic situation probably would exist for a period during which antagonistic factions within the armed forces would be fighting for supremacy. Out of this would evolve probably a military junta which would declare martial law and a state of siege and would bring some semblance of law and order. Under these circumstances the likelihood of success of the Prio or any other revolutionary

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force would be enhanced--if not to seize control at least to receive some recognition, perhaps even participation, in the new ruling order.

Economics

The economic stability of the country has never been seriously threatened since the coup, although economic difficulties have been experienced.

General contraction from the 1951-1952 sugar boom has virtually ceased with the country's return to what is considered a normal level of operation. Major factors contributing to this are: 1) the relative stabilization of sugar production, 2) the growing development of the rice industry, 3) the boom in private construction, 4) the government's expanding public works program, 5) expanding mining activities, and 6) the psychological uplift provided by the holding of elections and the promised reestablishment of normal political institutions.

Negative significant factors in the economic picture include: 1) continuing sizeable unemployment, 2) continuing budgetary difficulties, and 3) the "wait and see" policy of the regime until after the elections with regard to labor and other matters.

With reduction in government expenditures together with strong efforts to increase revenues, and with implementation of the new economic and social development plan, the country can look forward, with reasonable assurance, to a period of moderate economic well-being.

Labor

The main difficulty of organized labor in Cuba currently is that it is not receiving financial and political support from the government upon which it has been dependent historically. That the movement has succeeded remarkably in remaining united despite strong political and personal pressures from many directions is due largely to the general recognition that its strength lies in its unity. The greatest cohesive force, perhaps, is the leadership of Eusebio Mujal, Secretary General of the anti-Communist Confederation of Cuban Workers (CTC), which represents the major portion of organized labor.

The advent of Batista to power brought no serious labor

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reaction primarily because of the strong authority exercised by Batista and the army and secondarily by the almost complete absence of public support. During the past two years, the CTC has made no important moves without the prior approval of the regime. Labor's comparatively passive attitude also has been due in part to the general economic contraction during the past two years which has placed labor at a disadvantage. Furthermore, labor appears to be becoming more conscious of the damage to its interests arising from labor abuses. However, the situation has not been static. Labor has been going through a difficult period. During the pre-election period labor became quite restive and there were indications that the CTC might become obstructive to the regime. Mugal's belated coming out for Batista in the latter part of October was done under voluntary leave from his official position in order to, as was stated, "keep the CTC neutral in politics." Not being a candidate he did not have to take leave under CTC rules in order to engage in political activities. Mugal in the past has stressed frequently the need of keeping the CTC friendly terms with the government of the day. The move, from a vote-getting standpoint, was not looked upon by the regime with too friendly an eye and did little to promote more cordial relations between Batista and Mugal. Despite rumors that Mugal would be replaced during the immediate post-election period by a leader more amenable to the regime, it is believed that Mugal has the support in, and command over, the labor movement of a kind that Batista would be very reluctant to lose. It is believed that regardless of leadership, labor will continue to cooperate with the regime in return for future concessions. Labor in Cuba generally has followed whoever has been in power, and currently no critical problem is expected to arise from this sector of the national life.

Armed Forces

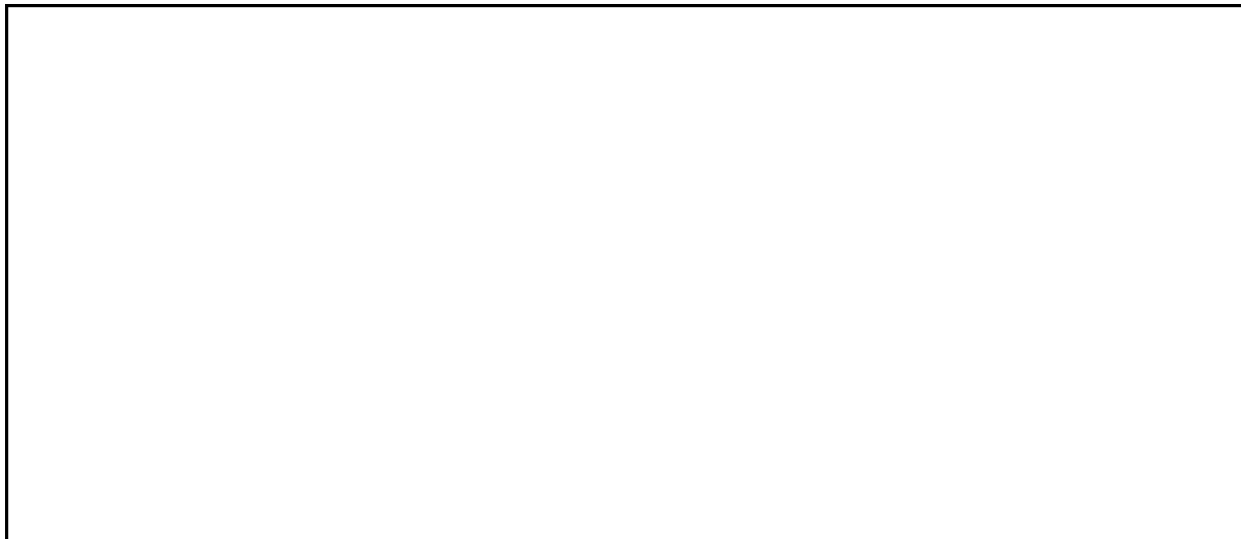
Batista continues to dominate the armed forces. The interdependence of their fortunes with his is mutually recognized and it is considered unlikely that the military would make any move that might jeopardize its current privileged position.

Since the coup Batista has done much to improve the economic and social status of the armed forces, particularly the enlisted personnel in which his major strength lies. Considered solely from the view point of individual self-interest, the majority of non-commissioned officers and enlisted men are not likely to become disloyal. The officers,

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who are powerless without the enlisted support, are expected to continue loyal since they received their present positions largely through their proven loyalty to Batista. 25X1



25X1 There persists a certain amount of resentment by the people against the brutal and high-handed methods of the military and police. [redacted]



25X1 Batista's proven intention of not relinquishing power and his winning of the presidential election appear to have strengthened his position within his own following. [redacted]



25X1 Apart from the crucial aspect of loyalty, the relative combat effectiveness of the armed forces is considered superior to any military force which conceivably might be mustered currently by the Prio revolutionary forces.

The Cuban armed forces, ever since the day of the coup, have been in a semi-alert status to guard against the element

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of surprise. Current army strength is estimated at 20,000. The strength of the navy, which possesses no major combat vessels, is 5,505, exclusive of 218 in the naval air arm, which has 26 aircraft. The air force, with some 56 aircraft, has a personnel strength of 680.

Communism

At one time perhaps the largest Communist party in Latin America with an estimated membership of 158,000 in 1948, the Partido Socialista Popular (PSP) registered only 56,000 affiliates in 1950. The party is now illegal and the number of affiliates is not known. It is estimated that the party now possesses some 25,000 militants. It is however the strongest and most influential Communist party in the Caribbean area. Its leadership, virtually unchanged since the coup, remains united, well-organized and aggressive. The PSP has received organizational and operational directives from the Soviet orbit and a number of its members have had 25X1 training behind the Iron Curtain. Cuban Communist delegations at various Communist international conferences have always been appreciable.

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The PSP maintains close relations with other Communist parties in Latin America and has assisted in training other Caribbean Communist parties.

The PSP's greatest influence and activity is in the labor movement. Communists maintain their own Confederation of Cuban Workers (CTC) under the very able Lazaro Pena. It controls some 40 out of 2000 local syndicates. Communists hold positions in key industries and their strength is greatest in the important tobacco, port and maritime, transportation and sugar trade unions. Activities connected with the infiltration of non-Communist labor unions have been stepped up ever since the coup, particularly among dock and tobacco workers and bus operators and their influence in non-Communist unions, although difficult to gauge in extent, may be said to have increased.

Communist strength in youth, women's, and student groups is almost as great as that in the labor movement. Prominent organizations in these groups include Junentud Socialista (Socialist Youth) and the Federacion Democratica de Mujeres Cubanas (Democratic Federation of Cuban Women) both closely allied with the PSP.

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Communist strength and influence in education remains significant and may be growing, particularly within the ranks of teachers and professors. It has been estimated that some 25 percent (difficult to evaluate) of the teachers are Communists and that their influence extends from the primary grades through the university level.

A comparatively recent development is the increased infiltration into radio, television, and the press.

Communists are having some success in infiltrating other parties, particularly those supporting Batista, and more specifically the labor blocs of those parties. Employing various subterfuges, such as pretending to be expellees of the party, a number have succeeded in penetrating government ministries particularly that of Labor and, to a lesser extent, Education. Several thousand are government employees although holding very minor positions.

Communists continue to possess capabilities for acts of sabotage, espionage activities, and perhaps limited guerrilla warfare. They can be expected to exploit any antiregime outbreak and probably would attempt to convert such into anti-US demonstrations at which they might have some initial success, since this would be consonant with one of their principal party aims--maintenance of a constant anti-US campaign. It must be noted, however, that the Communists, per se, lack the potentiality for creating serious widespread disturbances.

On the negative side, the party's outlawing and subsequent government repression have caused it to lose some strength. The comparative weakening of its position in labor has produced some loss of revenue which has engendered a series of difficulties for the party and some dissension within its lower ranks. The PSP has not been permitted to register and reorganize as a national political party under the terms of the current electoral code. Communists efforts to register a new front party have failed. Efforts at unification with opposition parties in formation of a "united opposition front" have failed conspicuously as did those connected with the advocacy of the "negative vote" against Batista as a result of Grau's withdrawal.

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[REDACTED] The PSP has very little, if any influence in the army, navy and national police.

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Critics of the regime had long contended that much of Batista's anti-Communist action was due entirely to his desire to impress the United States thereby gaining its support. The government's passage in June of strong measures directed against Communist individuals helped to combat the rising criticism that Batista only "talked" a big anti-Communist line. However, these measures have not been strictly implemented and their efficacy is seriously open to question.

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Present indications are that Batista feels that his surveillance authorities have the situation completely in hand and that he does not regard the Communist potential as a strong factor which might work toward his overthrow. It is estimated that during his new period of office, Batista, as have both he and other high Cuban officials done in the past, probably will soft-pedal the Communist issue whenever political expediency so dictates.

Foreign Relations

Cuba's relations with other Caribbean governments, which were not too good under the former Prio regime, have greatly improved under the Batista government. This has been due largely to the present trend in Caribbean countries toward rightist regimes of which Costa Rica is the sole exception.

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Batista currently is on his international good behavior and probably will not meddle in the internal affairs of other neighboring governments. His election assures continuation of Cuba's friendly relations with other Caribbean countries and the promotion of peace in that area.

The regime can be expected to continue to maintain close cordial relations with the United States and a firm pro-Western anti-Communist stand.

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